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ABSTRACT

In this guide to a quinmester course in which the student examines and analyzes the themes and techniques of the rock poet in the lyrics of modern rock music, performance objectives, course content, teaching strategies, learning activities, and lists of student and teacher resources are provided. (DB)

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AUTHORIZED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION FOR THE QUINMESTER PROGRAM

DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Language Arts: MODERN ROCK POETRY 5113.40
5114.41
5115.41
5116.41

English

CS 200 056

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION • 1971

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and
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for the
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Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
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COURSE NUMBER

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COURSE TITLE: MODERN ROCK POETRY

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Students will have the opportunity to listen to selected lyrics of modern rock music in order to examine and analyze the themes and techniques of the rock poet.

I. Performance objectives

A. Given a list of literary techniques, and several selections of rock lyrics exemplifying these techniques, the student will identify the techniques illustrated in each rock song.

B. Given selected rock lyrics, the student will identify the themes of the lyrics.

C. Given several selected rock songs, the student will discover the themes most common to rock poetry.

D. Given several selections of rock poetry dealing with the same theme, the student will differentiate between the attitudes taken towards the themes by the various artists.

E. Given different versions of the same rock songs performed by different artists, students will differentiate between the tonal effects achieved by the various performers.

F. Given a traditional poem, the student will predict whether the theme of the poem would be relevant to rock poetry.

G. Given proper media resources, the student will prepare a thematic presentation.

H. Given certain themes found in rock lyrics, the student will propose reasons for the popularity of these themes with rock poets.

II. Course content

A. Rationale

Rock music has undergone a transition from being dance music with a few inane words, to becoming listening music with a significant lyrical message. It is now a vehicle for the lyrics, which often provide an expression of the current generation, a message of individual or group significance, even a subjective statement by the composer. The lyrics of rock music employ poetic or literary devices common to more traditional non-musical poetry. In this respect, rock music has evolved into a form of "rock poetry", which perhaps should not be considered "poetry" per se, but nevertheless is a current medium of expression and one of the most vital organs of communication in the current world. Rock lyrics have become the poetry of the young, a true "poetry of the people" known and shared daily by many people in multi-media situations. The lyrics of rock poetry are heard, memorized, repeated, and used by young people today, and an insight into the form and content of rock poetry provides a valuable guideline to understanding one of the agents molding the minds of all who share its impact.

Some of the lyrics of rock music may shock or surprise listeners unaccustomed to the medium. It is suggested that teachers use their discretion, taking into consideration both the attitudes of the community and school and the maturity of their students in selecting the rock lyrics to be studied.

B. Range of subject matter

The students will be exposed to various popular rock songs. Discussions will be oriented around the following questions:

1. Does the student like the song and why?

2. What is more meaningful to the student, the music of the song or the words?

3. How is the author saying it?

   a. Images

   b. Simile and metaphor

   c. Irony

d. Pun

e. Satire

f. Understatement

g. Rhythm

4. Is it a poem and why?

III. Teaching strategies

A. Projects

1. Group research into the origins of rock and its development

2. Individual programs on development of particular rock groups or major themes found in rock music

3. Collages depicting the history of rock, personalities of rock, or particular themes found in rock music

B. Writing assignments

1. Analysis of theme of a rock lyric.

2. Analysis of the poetic elements in a rock lyric

3. Comparison and contrast of rock lyric and a conventional poem

4. Comparison and contrast of rock lyrics dealing with the same themes

5. Comparison and contrast of rock group styles

6. Research paper concerning development of a particular rock group

7. Essay on rock music as an accurate reflection of the times or as a valuable means of communication

8. Original rock poetry by the students

9. Paper on relation between form and content in rock music

C. Discussions

1. Group discussions on various selected rock lyrics and themes

2. Panel discussions on the literary merits of rock lyrics

3. Panel discussions on the major themes found in rock music

4. Panel discussions on correlation of music and theme and lifestyle of particular rock personalities

5. Panel discussion on rock music as a social force and social expression

D. Short lectures

1. Brief lecture on the development of rock

2. Lecture on specific literary techniques found in rock lyrics

a. Simile and metaphor

b. Imagery

c. Onomatopoeia

d. Irony

e. Pun

f. Satire

g. Understatement

h. Rhythm

i. Rhyme

3. Lecture on narrative, message, and theme

E. Field trips

1. Tour recording studio

2. Attend a rock concert

3. Attent a rock film

F. Resource personnel

Invite a local disc jockey to speak to the class about the development of rock or new trends in rock music

IV. Learning activities

A. Given a list of literary techniques and several selections of rock lyrics exemplifying these techniques, the student will identify the techniques illustrated in each rock song.

1. Students will read descriptions of literary techniques.

2. Students will discuss literary techniques.

3. Students will view slide presentation containing descriptions and illustrations of literary techniques.

4. Students will suggest orally various original examples of each literary technique.

5. Students will read selected rock lyrics, identifying literary techniques found in each.

6. Students will rephrase rock lyric lines not employing literary techniques. They will suggest possible revisions which utilize specific literary devices.

7. Students will match selected lyrics containing literary techniques with a list of literary devices.

B. Given selected rock lyrics, the student will identify the themes of the lyrics.

1. Students will listen to various rock songs.

2. Students will read the lyrics of various rock songs.

3. Students will discuss ideas found in the song.

4. Students will act out (pantomime) the action in a rock song.

5. Students will present an illustration of a rock song.

6. Students will propose possible themes to which the ideas found in selected rock songs refer, such as generation gap; alienation; loneliness; love/brotherhood; drugs; protest (war, racial, civil rights, establishment); ecology; return to religion; hedonism; primitivism.

7. Students will write a paper in which they select the theme of a rock song and defend the choice by using specific examples from the lyrics.

C. Given several selected rock songs, the student will discover the themes most common to rock poetry.

1. Students will identify themes found in several selections of rock poetry.

2. Students will make lists of different themes they have identified in rock poetry. Some possibilities are: generation gap; alienation; lonliness; love/brotherhood; drugs; protest (war, racial, civil rights, establishment); ecology; return to religion; hedonism; primitivism.

3. Students will present a report on themes most commonly found in rock poetry and document it using lists they have compiled.

4. Students will compare their findings on rock themes with those of their classmates.

5. Students will suggest additional themes not already listed that would be appropriate to rock poetry.

D. Given several selections of rock poetry dealing with the same theme, the student will differentiate between the attitudes taken towards the themes by the various artists.

1. Students will listen to two rock songs dealing with the same theme, but taking different approaches to the theme. Example: Using the theme of drugs, different approaches may be: Pro: "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds", "Codeine" - Buffy St. Marie; "White Rabbitt" - Jefferson Airplane; "With a Little Help From My Friends" - Beatles. Con: "She's Come Undone" - Guess Who; "The Pusher" - Steppenwolf; "Mister Tamborine Man" - Dylan; "Accidental Suicide" - John Mayall.

2. Students will read the lyrics to the rock songs they have previously heard.

3. Students will identify the theme of the selected rock songs.

4. Students will explore the differences and similarities of two songs by comparing and contrasting the literary devices found in the lyrics of each.

5. Students will suggest the purpose of the artist in using certain literary devices in the lyrics.

6. Students will determine if the artists or composers of two rock songs with the same theme have the same purpose or attitude towards the theme.

7. Students will write a subjective paper indicating which purpose or attitude of two different artists is most relevant to the theme of the song.

8. Students will suggest different attitudes that may be expressed by poets using a given theme popular with rock poets.

9. Students will listen to selections of rock music exemplifying possible attitudes a poet might take toward a given theme.

10. Students will write two rock poems dealing with the same theme but assuming different attitudes.

E. Given different versions of the same rock songs performed by different artists, students will differentiate between the tonal effects achieved by the various performers.

1. Students will listen to different versions of the same rock song performed by different artists. Examples: "Here Comes the Sun" - (Beatles/Richie Havens); "Eleanor Rigby" - (Beatles/Aretha Franklin); "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" - (Simon and Garfunkel/ Aretha Franklin); "Me and My Bobby McGee" - (Janis Joplin/Gordon Lightfoot); "Gentle on My Mind" - (Glen Campbell/Aretha Franklin); "She Came In Through the Bathroom Window" - (Beatles/Joe Cocker).

2. Students will identify the differences of effect of two or more versions of the same rock song performed by different artists.

3. Students will classify the various effects created by different versions of the same rock song.

4. Students will identify the specific technique used by a performer to create varied effects conveyed by versions of the same rock song.

5. Students will define the meaning of "tone" in a poem or in music.

6. Students will illustrate different tones which may be found in selected rock songs.

7. Students will identify the extent to which tone influences the total effect of two or more versions of the same rock song.

8. Students will identify the purpose of the artist through a particular tonal effect, citing evidence from the rock selection to substantiate statements.

9. Students will write an essay determining which of two different tonal versions of the same rock song most accurately conveys the meaning of the lyrics, citing specific tonal devices and the particular portion of the lyrics which they affect.

10. Students will read the lyrics of selected rock songs using various tonal effects in each reading.

11. Students will identify recurrent devices used by specific artists to achieve a special tonal identity.

12. Students will suggest different techniques which could be used with certain rock lyrics to vary the tonal effect.

13. Students will describe how each rock artist on a prepared list would perform particular rock songs in his own way to achieve different tonal effects peculiar to his own tonal identity.

14. Students who have musical talent will present an original variation or arrangement of a popular song, asking classmates to determine any change or reaction they have to the new version of the song.

15. Students will prepare a slide sequence showing their various reactions to different tonal versions of the same rock song.

F. Given a traditional poem, the student will predict whether the theme of the poem would be relevant to rock poetry.

1. Students will read several traditional poems dealing with themes popular in rock poetry. Examples:

Protest (War) - "The Man He Killed" - Hardy
"War Is King" - Crane

(Establishment) - "The World Is Too Much With Us" - Wordsworth
"The Unknown Citizen" - Auden
"Much Madness Is Divinest Sense" - Dickinson

Primitivism - "Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood" - Wordsworth

Alienation - "Richard Cory" - Robinson
"I've Been One Acquainted With The Night" - Frost
"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" - Eliot

Generation Gap - "When I Was One and Twenty" - Housman
"The Leaden Eyed" - Vachel Lindsay

Hedonism - "Rubiayat" - Omar Khayyam
"To The Virgins To Make Much of Time" - Herrick

Return to Religion - "Karma" - Robinson
"To Jesus on His Birthday" - Millay
"Christ Climbed Down" - Ferlinghetti

Love/Brotherhood - "Leaves of Grass" - Whitman
"Rime of the Ancient Mariner" - Coleridge

2. Students will bring in rock lyrics dealing with the themes of the more traditional poetry suggested in F. 1.

3. Students will examine any differences and similarities in attitudes expressed in a traditional poem and a current rock song.

4. Students will examine the literary techniques used in a traditional poem and in a rock song.

5. Students will explore the backgrounds of the traditional poets and the rock poets.

6. Students will write a paper comparing and contrasting attitudes, literary techniques, and objectives of the traditional poets and the rock poets.

G. Given proper media resources, the student will prepare a thematic presentation.

1. Students will listen to the first rock opera "Tommy" by the Who.

2. Students may listen to other rock operas.

3. Students will prepare a collage concerning different attitudes taken by rock groups on a theme popular in rock music.

4. Students will prepare a 15-20 minute tape developing one theme popular in rock music, including selections from different rock artists and possibly from traditional poems dealing with the same theme.

5. Students will prepare a slide/tape presentation dealing with a theme popular in rock music.

6. Students will prepare a slide sequence developing one theme popular in rock music.

7. Students will write a paper developing a theme popular in rock music, using selections both from traditional poetry and current rock music lyrics.

H. Given certain themes found in rock lyrics, the student will propose reasons for the popularity of these themes with rock poets.

1. Students will justify the relevance of the themes most common to rock poetry by suggesting specific current events that relate to these themes. Some of these themes may be: generation gap; alienation; love/brotherhood; drugs; lonliness; protest (war, racial, civil rights, establishment); ecology; return to religion; hedonism; primitivism.

2. Students will investigate the factual background of events relating to the themes common to rock poetry.

3. Students will compare and contrast the facts pertaining to events related to rock poetry themes with attitudes expressed in rock songs towards the same themes.

4. Students will compare and contrast various viewpoints expressed in magazine articles and/or newspapers towards rock poetry themes with attitudes expressed in rock lyrics.

5. Students will examine current trends and ideologies and determine to what extent these have been used as themes in rock lyrics.

6. Students will determine themes most popular with specific rock composers and artists.

7. Students will investigate any changes or developments in the thematic interest of specific rock poets.

8. Students will research the life-style and personal experiences of selected rock poets, comparing the poet's experiences to the themes prevalent in his rock lyrics.

9. Students will determine the influence of a rock poet's personal experiences on his theme selection, documenting their findings with specific references to the poet's rock lyrics.

10. Students will prepare a tape presentation tracing a specific artist's thematic change or development.

11. Students will prepare a slide/tape presentation of popular rock poetry themes, documenting the musical selections with factual illustrations of the themes.

12. Students will prepare a tape presentation tracing an artist's life or the development of his career using selected lyrics written by the artist.

13. Students will estimate, using specific references from magazine articles, editorials, etc., the extent to which rock poetry has served as a vehicle of social expression or acted as a social force.

V. Student resources

A. State-adopted textbooks - NONE

B. Non-state-adopted supplementary materials

Richard Goldstein, The Poetry of Rock, Bantam Books.

J. Marks, editor, Rock and Other Four Letter Words: Music of the Electric Generation, Bantam Books.

C. The following record albums are recommended:

1. Beatles

a. Revolver

b. Rubber Soul

c. Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

d. The Beatles

2. George Harrison - All Things Must Pass

3. Bob Dylan

a. Bringing It All Back Home

b. Best of Bob Dylan

4. Simon & Garfunkel

a. Sounds of Silence

b. Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme

c. Bridge Over Troubled Waters

5. The Who - Tommy

6. Grateful Dead - any one of their albums

7. Hair - these selections are suggested:

"Aquarius"
"Let the Sunshine In"
"One"
"Good Morning Starshine"
"What A Piece of Work is Man"
"Easy To Be Hard"
"Hair"

8. Woodstock - appropriate selections

9. Rolling Stones - Beggars Banquet

10. Donovan - Greatest Hits

11. Richie Havens - Alarm Clock

12. Crosby, Stills & Nash - Judy Blue Eyes

13. Elton John

    a. Elton John

    b. Tumbleweed Connection

14. James Taylor - James Taylor

15. Moody Blues - Question of Balance

16. The Doors

    a. The End

    b. Soft Parade

17. Credence Clearwater Revival - any one of their albums

18. Joni Mitchell - Marcie

19. Janis Joplin - Pearl

20. Phil Oches - Pleasure of the Harbor

21. Buffy Sainte Marie - Illuminations

22. Rod McKuen - any one of his albums on which he reads his poetry

VI. Teacher resources

A. Carl Belz, The Story of Rock, (Oxford University Press, 1969.)

B. Jonathan Eisen, Editor, The Age Of Rock, (Vintage Books, 1969.)

C. Richard Goldstein, The Poetry of Rock, (Bantam Books.)

D. Helen W. English, "Rock Poetry, Relevance, and Revolution," (English Journal, Vol. 59, pg. 1122.)

E. Phyl Garland, The Sound of Soul, (Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1969.)

F. J. Marks, Editor, Rock and Other Four Letter Words: Music of the Electric Generation, (Bantam Books.)

G. Arnold Shaw, The Rock Revolution, (Crowell-Collier Press, 1969.)